

WINTER SPORTS



INSIDE: LUDINGTON AND MANISTEE HIGH SCHOOL

Ludington boys swimming

Orioles more than ready in pool

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

The swimming and diving team at Ludington hasn't had too many hiccups when it comes to re-working its practice schedule because of COVID protocols.

In fact, if it weren't for weather conditions being too bad to travel, the team would have already competed in a handful of events this year.

Nonetheless, head coach Joe Schneider is thrilled to have a season after last year's abruptly ended a day before the state meet was set to begin.

"It hit a lot of kids hard when that happened. But

'They'll do **whatever it takes** to get (to the state meet).'

Joe Schneider
Ludington boys swim coach

we're coming into this year with a lot of good attitudes. I even have an assistant who was a swimmer set to compete at state last year, so he helps bring a little fire to the team."

Schneider also noted that with a smaller team this year, workouts have been easier to conduct, whether it



Evan Walls



Andrew Talsma



Chazz Rohrer



Colby Peplinski



Max Hockanson



Charles Austin

be in the weight room or in the pool.

With ample time to practice, Schneider says there have been a few swimmers and divers that have caught his eye and look to have big seasons.

"Max Hockanson has been putting in a lot of work,

and I think he could have a big year in the 100 butterfly. Chazz Rohrer and Evan Walls will be big for us in a couple of events each and in a relay, and then in diving, Evan Bennett and Colby Peplinski are performing really well right now."

Ludington's roster:

SENIORS: Evan Walls, Andrew Talsma, Chazz Rohrer, Colby Peplinski, Max Hockanson, Charles Austin.

JUNIORS: Evan Bennett, Hayden Madl, Andrew Schrader.

SOPHOMORE: Lucas Peterson.
FRESHMAN: Rowen Vaara.

As for goals for this year's team, Schneider says that not only does he want to see his team get better every day, but getting back to state is a huge goal for everybody.

"Obviously, with how things ended last year, our kids want a chance to get back to state and compete. I know I have a few seniors that have been close and haven't been able to make it the last couple years, so they'll be doing whatever it takes to get there."

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Ludington competitive cheer

Ludington returns several girls



Mollie Mazur



Gabrielle Gonzales



Abbygail Rodriguez



DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO

Ludington's Gabrielle Gonzales, foreground, competes with her Orioles' teammates during the Mason County Central Invitational during the 2019-20 season in Scottville.

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

For some winter sports, the state guidelines on non-contact practicing had put a wrench into some workout plans coaches had set up.

For others, including competitive cheer, it may have cut out work from one of their rounds, but gave them ample time to work on their non-contact first two round routines.

Ludington competitive cheer coach Karen Mazur said that the team was just happy to be back working together and took this time to really nail down their opening round routines.

"It hasn't affected us too much because the first two rounds are complete no contact. So early on, we were able to get that nailed down well, and now we really just have to focus on the third round. It worked out OK for us, I would say."

While it was good for the team to get those routines ready to go, Mazur said she had to be flexible with her practice schedule to make sure girls weren't getting burnt out.

"I actually cut our practices back a little bit because you can only do the same two things so many times. Running things like this has really lit a fire under us to get the best out of everyone when we meet."

This year's team is full of return-

ers from last season, which not only helps with learning the routines, but gives them a powerful group to build off of.

Ludington's roster:

SENIORS: Mollie Mazur, Abbygail Rodriguez, Gabrielle Gonzales.

JUNIORS: Emma Adams, Tamberly Williams.

SOPHOMORES: Isabella Acheson, Aleena Mazur, Arissa Shimmons.

FRESHMAN: Jamie Barron.

"Aleena Mazur comes back as our top flier and tumbler. She was doing things last year that we really hadn't been able to do in the years I've been coaching," coach Mazur said. "Mollie Mazur and Abbygail Rodriguez are two really strong bases that are coming from the football season. Tamberly Williams rounds us out as a backer and the four of them make a fantastic stunt team."

Though there's been a lot of work done on the mats early this year, Mazur says that maybe the biggest key to her team's success is what they are building off the mat.

"More than anything, this time has really brought us all closer together. You need to have trust in one another out on the mat, and I think we took advantage of this time to really build some strong bonds."

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Ludington wrestling

LHS used non-contact time to prepare

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

The sport hit the hardest during this season would have to be the wrestling programs across the state.

With no contact practices being enforced for the early part of the season, it set some teams behind in their development of their wrestlers.

For head coach Jon Ransom and the Ludington wrestling program, he took this opportunity to get his team in better shape and to work on some fundamentals.

"It put us a little bit behind on things, but the kids have adapted really well. This is probably the best conditioned team I've had because of it. But working on things like our footwork and things like that that don't involve contact have been key for us," he said.

Ransom said that during these practices, it was hard to keep his team away from the mat with how eager they were to get started.

"They kept asking me when they could start, and I'd just have to keep telling them I have to wait to get instruction on when things can get fully going. When I



JEFF KIESSEL | DAILY NEWS

Ludington's Nicholi Kehrer wrestles Shelby's Randall Parker in the 285-pound weight class during Wednesday's meet in Ludington. Kehrer defeated Parker by a second period pin.

told them they could start doing contact stuff, I'd never seen a happier group of kids," he said.

With a jam-packed season, there is a chance that some kids could get burnt out easily. Ransom, however, thinks that his team is ready to go and will get stronger as the

season progresses.

"We only have one open date, but that could obviously change. But the kids are ready to get going and start wrestling," he said. "That's what these kids want to do, so as far as a burn out I don't necessarily see that happening."

One big returning wrestler for Ransom is junior Nikolai Kehrer, and he expects Kehrer to lead this year's team.

"Kehrer (is) at 285. (He'll) be our top (guy) this year, but that doesn't short anything from anybody else. We have strong wrestlers at just about every class, and ev-

ery single one of them is going to make an impact for us this year," he said.

Ludington's roster:

JUNIORS: Nikolai Kehrer, Joe Mosqueda, Tiler Marrison.

SOPHOMORE: Aric Storm.

FRESHMEN: Corbin Wagenmaker, Hayden Moore, Mason

Marrison.

While Ransom doesn't have a lot of depth on this year's team, he thinks individually is where the team will shine this season.

"We don't have strength in numbers, but where we lack in numbers, we make up for in our individual performances. I think the short season benefits us, and even when we go to these tournaments, we will do really well individually but still finish team wise lower than we should.

"This group has really come together as one in conditioning and that's just going to make us that much stronger."

With a shortened season ahead, Ransom says he's proud of the way this group has worked in practices and really thinks there could be something special coming this year.

"They just want to work and compete all the time. It's a positive group of kids because they knew there was a chance they wouldn't have a season. So they're in the mindset that something is better than nothing and they're taking advantage of this opportunity."

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Ludington girls bowling

LHS returns pair from last year

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

Ludington bowling head coach Maggie Bates says that early in the season, COVID protocols has made planning for this upcoming season difficult.

"COVID has really made the season interesting. I couldn't have any pre-season practices so that made it hard to see exactly where my numbers were," Bates said.

Bates has two returners from last season that she expects to have big years from.

"Bailey Streeter returns as my second-highest average from last year, so that's great



Abbigail
Bledsoe



Leonie
Dahm



Bailey
Streeter

news for us. Heidi Faust is my second returning bowler," Bates said. "She's a junior this year, and in the couple meets we've had she is coming out strong and confident and that's great to see."

Ludington's roster:

SENIORS: Abbigail Bledsoe, Leonie

Dahm, Bailey Streeter.

JUNIOR: Heidi Faust.
FRESHMEN: Grace Ashley, Rylee Hard-
enburgh.

There are also a handful of

newcomers this year that Bates is looking forward to seeing the production they can bring to the team.

"Leonie Dahm is a foreign exchange student from Germany, and she brings a lot of strength with her ball and has a fantastic attitude about ev-

erything. Abby Bledsoe brings a great strength in her own game. She's learning the game, and I have complete confidence in her as we go through the season," she said.

With a tough season ahead and uncertainty on how many matches will get played this year, Bates is trying to make sure all of her bowlers are staying strong mentally.

"My outlook on the season is always a positive one because one of my mottos is to never quit and never give up. I really push that with my girls so I feel this season is going to be a lot of learning and a lot of personal goals with a lot of personal growth," Bates said.

'My outlook on the season is always a positive one because one of my mottos is to never quit and never give up. I really push that with my girls so I feel **this season is going to be a lot of learning** and a lot of personal goals with a lot of personal growth.'

Maggie Bates
Ludington bowling coach

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Ludington girls basketball

Stowe takes reins of girls program

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

To be a first-year head coach most seasons comes with a lot of learning; learning the program, learning the roster you have and even the school you're coming to.

This year, however, with the inability to have full summer workouts and early season scrimmages, it makes that task even harder.

For Warren Stowe, first-year head coach of the Ludington girls' basketball team, he has had to do a lot of learning in a short amount of time.

"This year has been a rollercoaster, not just for me, but for the team. They didn't have any idea when things would start so trying to keep their spirits up and keep them positive was the biggest thing I tried to instill in them," Stowe said.

With already a few games under their belt, Stowe is getting a good feel for the team he has and has already seen a few players step up in a big way.

"Abi Bandstra, on the court, really sets the tone for us defensively. We want to have that defensive mindset because that's what Ludington basketball is about and to have someone out there on the court like her is always great.

"Off the court, it's been Hailey Stowe being that leader for us," Warren Stowe said. "She's one of our better scorers, but to have someone that leads by example as she does and is that senior leader helps with long-term season and program success."

Last year's squad could go 11 to 12 players deep, which gave teams a lot of different looks lineup-wise and kept girls fresh

on both ends.

This year, Stowe looks to be about nine players deep in his rotation, including a freshman or two that can get playing time with the MHSAA's five-quarter rule this season.

Stowe said that the ability to work those girls into his rotation could be tough this year, but sees it has a positive going forward.

"We haven't had a ton of time to work with the freshmen girls at the varsity level yet, since they're still trying to figure out things on the (junior varsity) team. But coach Dan Mesyar and I are in constant communication, and I'll be able to go to him and tell him I need so and so for two quarters tonight so he knows he's got three from her."

Ludington's roster:

SENIOR: Hailey Stowe.

JUNIORS: Jocelyn Austin, Abi Bandstra, Brynn Cole, Braylin Lemire, RyAnn Rohrer.

SOPHOMORES: Annie Kline, Keelyn Laird, Olivia Lynn.

FRESHMEN: Emma McKinley, Karli Mesyar, Rylee Stone.

Of all the sports schedules this year, basketball looks to be the most loaded as they can play up to three games a week.

While some may think this could lead to burning out players, Stowe thinks it is a positive for the girls this season.

"In my experience, kids like playing more than practicing. We need to be cognizant of what we're doing in practice so we don't overwork them there. But they're going to be excited for the games every night and are going to go out and compete at the best of their abilities every night," Stowe said.

As for goals for this season, Stowe says the team has some they want to keep under wraps but mostly, just want to get better every day.

'We need to be cognizant of **what we're doing in practice** so we don't overwork them there.'

Warren Stowe
Ludington girls basketball coach



Ludington's Abi Bandstra applies the defensive pressure late in the first half of the Orioles' season opener last week at Hawley Gymnasium in Ludington.

JEFF KIESSEL | DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO

Ludington boys basketball

Shank gets creative in preparing LHS



Kyle Barnett



Brad Mesyar



Nick Patterson



Ty Wincheski



Mitchell Fessler

BY NOAH GENSON
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

In nearly two decades of coaching, there hasn't been a year quite like this one for Ludington boys basketball coach Thad Shank.

Shank says that this year more than any year before he has had to get very creative with what they can do in practice.

"We're doing as much as we can. We've guarded cones more than I ever can remember anybody guarding cones. But cones don't replicate what certain guys can do on the floor," Shank said.

With this being one of the younger groups Shank has had, it's been tougher than usual to get them acclimated to the system he has in place.

"We have a lot of young kids and haven't had a great deal of time with them to try and get them all on the same page," he said.

Ludington is returning just one starter, Peyton LaCombe, from last year's team. Shank says that while there isn't one guy in particular that could step up, somebody will end up taking more responsibility on the court.

"Everyone is going to get their chance out there. When you don't have a lot of time to work on five-on-five stuff, it's hard to get a feel for who is ready to step up. I think once we get more time on the court together there will be a few guys who take on bigger roles."

Ludington's roster:

SENIORS: Kyle Barnett, Mitchell Fessler, Brad Mesyar, Nicholas Patterson, Ty Wincheski.

JUNIORS: Peyton LaCombe, Wilson Gunsell, Dylan Eaton, Caleb Smith.

SOPHOMORES: Levi Laman, Matthew Westhouse.

FRESHMAN: David Shillinger



Ludington's Brad Mesyar defends Mason County Central's Jayden Perrone during Monday's non-conference game played at Ludington's Hawley Gymnasium.

DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO

Shank hopes that these months off of basketball will give his kids a burst of energy to get through the season strong.

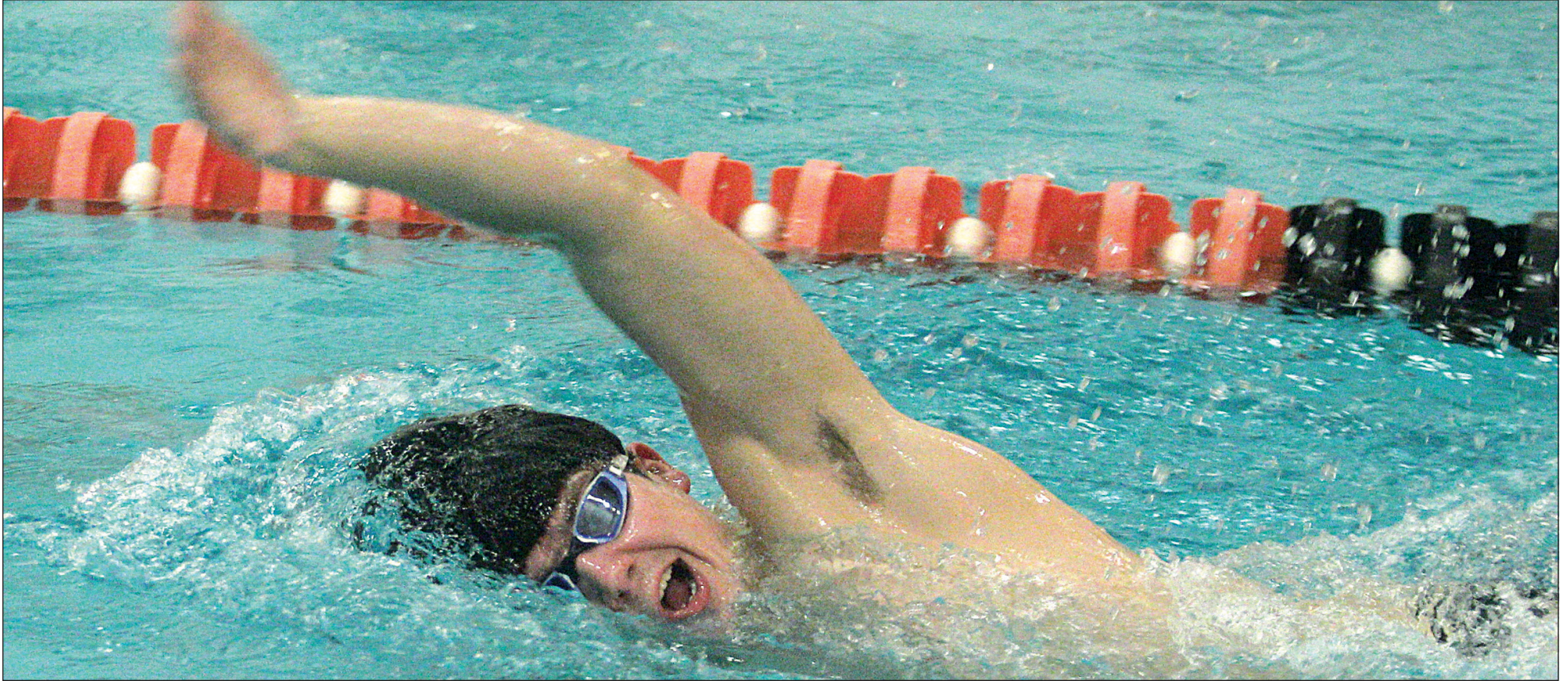
"I think with the 11 months

that these kids have gone through, everybody will be excited just to get the chance to play. I can already see it in practices that we've had that they're ready to go and get to some games."

With a lot of uncertainty still weighing over this year's season, Shank kept it simple with what he's most looking forward to from this year's team.

"I'm really looking forward to just us getting better. I'm

looking for ways in these six or seven weeks to come together as a basketball team and really put things together. More so than anything, I'm looking forward to being in the gym with the guys."



DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTOS

Early season action for Orioles swimming

Ludington's Evan Walls competes in a leg of the 200-yard medley relay during a meet last week at Donald C. Baldwin Community Pool in Ludington against Mona Shores.



Ludington's Chazz Rohrer looks up at the scoreboard to see his time after swimming in the 50-yard freestyle race last week.



Ludington's Max Hockanson swims a part of the 200-yard individual medley during a meet last week against Mona Shores.

Lakeshore Badgers hockey

Badgers going with 16 players for 2021 season

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

VICTORY TWP. — It's going to be a short bench again for the Lakeshore Badgers co-op hockey team, but that's something the team has grown accustomed to over the last few years.

Right now, the Badgers have 16 players ready to suit up this season, including four seniors who'll be counted on to provide that always important leadership on the ice.

That means the Badgers will always have one goalie and 15 skaters, as long as everyone remains healthy and the team can avoid any pauses because of COVID-19.

Jack Bossick, Jeffrey Schwass, Jonah Lundberg and Mateo Barnett are the four seniors on the squad. First-year head coach Bill Shriver expects each of them to be major contributors to any success the team has this season.

Russell Schade and Luke Larr are a pair of juniors who've seen plenty of ice time since joining the varsity their freshman years, and they'll also be expected to give the Badgers leadership.

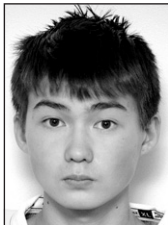
Lakeshore also has three or four players who are in the first year on the varsity because there is no junior varsity team for them to learn the ropes on.

Two of those first-year players are sophomores, with two or three freshmen.

"It's a good group of guys," Shriver said. "They're just looking forward to actually playing, like everyone is. Everyone is excited to actually start playing."

"Practice is fun, but we were starting to lose them mentally. As coaches, we were doing everything we could to keep them going. But, what was the focus of the practice?"

Shriver, who assisted on the varsity the past two years, is excited to have Schwass of Manistee High returning because he has played every position on the ice. The last two years Schwass manned one of the forward positions, but Shriver is moving him back to defense to start the season.



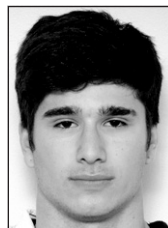
Jonah
Lundberg



Jack
Bossick



Jeffrey
Schwass



Mateo
Barnett

"It's nice to be able to move him in either direction," Shriver said. "He's a big kid, so on the power play we'll park him in front of the net."

Lundberg of Ludington is what Shriver says is a conservative, stay-at-home defenseman.

"When the rush is coming at him, he's very good at the basics of keeping the forward wide and making him make a decision, which obviously buys time for his defensive partner to get back into the zone if he's behind," Shriver said.

Barnett, from Manistee Catholic, is called a sparkplug by his coach.

"He's very physical," Shriver said. "He is a really good football player, and a good basketball player, also, and he's another one you can send to the front of the net."

Shriver likes the consistency of Bossick, a forward from Ludington.

"You know what you're getting with Jack," Shriver added. "He's really quiet, but he's real intelligent."

This year the Badgers have the luxury of having two goalies, regular starter Alex Shriver, the coach's son, and Connor Rudzki, a sophomore who played travel hockey the last couple of years and is all of 6-foot-2.

Rudzki plays defense when he's not in net. Shriver is a forward when he plays out of the net. Now all of the



DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTOS

Lakeshore's Jeffrey Schwass skates toward the corner in Wednesday afternoon's game against Big Rapids at West Shore Community Ice Arena.



Lakeshore's Jonah Lundberg tries to skate the puck out of the Badgers' zone while being pressured by a Big Rapids forward Wednesday afternoon at West Shore Community Ice Arena.

"Our younger players will learn, sort of a baptism by fire," Shriver said. "They've got the basics down. They can pass, they can skate. It's just that the varsity game is faster than what they're used to."

"Everybody will get a chance to play with just 15 skaters. We'll basically roll two and a half lines and keep it going. Once we start playing, we'll see what we have."

"On the defensive side, we're just going to play a straight zone because we just don't have the speed or the skill to play any type of man-to-man."

Shriver said the Badgers have been working a lot on zone entry and breakout.

"That's all set up by the fore-check, so we'll have to see how aggressive they'll be," Shriver said. "That will determine what kind of offensive set we have."

pressure won't all be on Shriver. If absolutely necessary, Barnett is capable of playing in goal.

Also playing for the team after

playing travel hockey is Evan McCarthy. Schade is in his third year playing varsity as a junior who has the maturity to be a captain.

Manistee girls basketball

Kott back on bench of girls basketball program

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — In the first two games of the season delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Manistee girls basketball team has struggled to score, largely in part because it doesn't have the experience other teams do.

With that youth comes the difficult adjustment to actually playing defense against a team with different uniforms, as well as facing a defense when it possesses the ball.

The Chippewas have 14 players on the varsity, after five or six opted out for vari-

ous reasons before the MHSAA gave the green light to start competition.

Several junior varsity players are eligible to be added to the varsity because of the new five-quarter rule, which permits them to play five quarters between junior varsity and varsity games.

Manistee has three seniors on the roster, including Taylor Murray, Logan Wayward and Olivia Smith who will be expected to provide a lot of leadership.

"Other than those three, we're a fairly young team," Manistee coach Kenn Kott said. "We're really counting

on those three seniors to start telling the younger kids 'Well, this is the way it goes.'

"I know it's kind of hard because of the year being goofy, but you can't say, 'This is the way it goes because this is the way we usually do things.'"

"But they're going to try to explain to everybody that in a normal year this is how things run, and this is how we do things. At the same time, I'm expecting them to tell those young kids what to do in this unusual year. So, they're going to do double duty."

Manistee experienced problems putting the ball in

the basket last year, and that has carried over into the early portion of the new season.

The Chippewas lost two of their leading scorers (Lindsay Kelley and Sarah Thompson) to graduation. Both were all-conference selections. But the Chippewas hope that they can somehow find their shooting touch, and soon.

It's going to be a growing situation, though, with juniors, sophomores and even freshman filling out the roster, with all of them hoping to make an impact.

"As you grow, you hope to get better at a lot of things," Kott said. "That's basically

what we're trying to accomplish this season, as strange as it is. You hope everything can fall into place by the end.

"The teams that are established, and have a lot of returning players and know what they're doing from last year with veterans on the team, they're going to have an advantage over everybody. We saw that in our first three games. It's going to take some time."

Juniors on the team are Calli Ronning, Alyssa Jackoviak and Breanna Whitmer.

"At the beginning of the season we talked about what we were going to need from

everybody and that's effort from everybody," Kott said. "Everybody is going to have to do their part, and that's going to help us grow."

Ludington and Western Michigan Christian are expected to be the major contenders for the Lakes 8 Activities Conference title in Kott's opinion.

Both teams have a lot of height, and WMC has a slew of veterans and likes to run the floor. Kott wouldn't be surprised to see WMC go a long way in the post-season... should everyone make it that far.

SEE GIRLS, PAGE 7

Manistee boys swimming

Chippewas put focus on qualifying for state — now

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — After sitting out a 14-day quarantine because of COVID-19, the Manistee boys swimming and diving team finally resumed training for what will necessarily be a shortened season.

The Chippewas are 1-1 after losing to Ludington in their season opener and then registering a convincing victory over Fremont at

the Paine Aquatic Center.

Coach Corey Van Fleet has high hopes for this group, which consists of nine seniors among the 19 on the roster. Everybody is back from last year, other than a foreign exchange student.

Among the group is an eighth grader, Alec Lampen, who won the middle school state championship in the backstroke last year and is expected to make an immediate impact.

Ben Sullivan, Griffin Antal, Zach Lee, Seth Thompson and Dylan Johnson all return from last year when the Chippewas were set to have a coming out party at the state championship meet.

"We got within 30 miles of the state meet and they turned us around," Van Fleet said. "These kids were good then. We would have been great last March-April."

"They've been on ice since then, and they're still good.

We are excellent. They've done a great job, and we will do very well this year.

"Our goal is to be among the top 10 teams in the State of Michigan. This is really a top-notch group of athletes. This is one of the best teams we've ever had. Maybe one of the best teams I've ever coached in my career."

Manistee was also the No. 1 academic team in the state out of 400 programs last year with a 3.87 grade point

average as a team out of 19 swimmers.

Van Fleet's biggest concern is having the swimmers make their state meet cuts in the short span of time that is available now to do so.

"We know we can swim fast at the end, but we have to swim fast now to make the cuts so we can have a meet at the end," Van Fleet said.

"All the big invitationals were canceled. The places where we would normally go

and swim everybody else in the state in open competition (are canceled).

"So, we're down to four or five dual meets and the (Coastal) Conference meet in terms of making our cuts. We'll make them. We'll be fine."

Van Fleet said the team's training program has been solid, and he has no worries about swimmers making their cuts and qualifying for the state meet.

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Manistee boys basketball

Pair of twins, seniors, leading Manistee

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Coach Dan Gustad has 10 players on the Manistee varsity boys basketball team this year, bringing a sophomore up from the junior varsity and welcoming a foreign exchange student.

In addition to that, Gustad has four juniors and four seniors. It's a mix that Gustad believes can help the Chippewas some to success on the court.

Unfortunately, the Chippewas began the six-week season with three consecutive losses. They need a win in the worst way to gain some confidence.

The four seniors are a pair of twins, Grant and Drew Schlaff as well as Mason and Caleb Adamski. All of them have potential to be solid scoring threats.

"Right now, Grant and Drew will be the bulk of our scoring opportunities because obviously this is their third year on the varsity playing for me," Gustad said.

"We're kind of looking for them to be the team leaders, and pick up a lot of the scoring load we lost from last year. The Adamski boys obviously have some size, and they're going to have to be our inside presence and re-

bounding forces, and shutting down the big guys from the other teams."

Vincent Fett, Connor Richel, Trevor Mikula and Caiden Cudney are the juniors on the squad.

Gustad is impressed with the energy that the juniors bring to the table.

"They had some real good success on the junior varsity level last year," Gustad said. "The team did very well, and they have that competitive spirit. They bring that winning attitude.

"It's nice to see their positive focus, telling the other guys, 'Hey, we can get this done guys.' That's a good asset those guys have this year."

Jeffery Huber is the sophomore Gustad brought up. He was the quarterback for the football team last fall, and has a lot of athletic ability.

It was a sheer numbers deal with Gustad needing 10 guys to practice, but the coach added that Huber worked exceptionally hard to earn the spot. Plus, he's a guard which was needed.

Francesco Flumini is a 6-foot-2, left-handed foreign exchange student who can play just about any position on the floor for the Chippewas.

"He has decent size and a nice touch," Gustad said.

"He'll be a nice addition to the roster once he gets comfortable with the new surroundings and the kids he's playing with."

Gustad said this year more than any other it's not so much about wins and losses, but going out and having a good time with their teammates and improving every night.

Despite starting 0-3, Gustad said he's seen some good spurts, like good shooting at times, and good defense at times. The Chippewas just have to put it all together.

"I'm very pleased with our defensive effort the first three games of the season," Gustad said. "Our offensive output hasn't been where we would like it to be.

"We're becoming a little better defensive team, and I think if we throw a little rebounding in there and start to be a little more aggressive on the offensive end, I think we can turn the corner and be more competitive in some of these games."

Manistee has a couple kids who are pretty quick, but the Chippewas will bring the ball up, set up the offense and grind games out that way.

Gustad thinks the Chippewas are more comfortable from 15 feet out and working in rather than shooting from the perimeter.

Manistee wrestling

Bond takes charge of Chippewas wrestling

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Logan Bond takes over coaching the Manistee co-ed wrestling team, and has 10 athletes on the roster as the team prepared for the season.

Unfortunately, two of them are presently unavailable so the Chippewas are working with eight wrestlers in the training facility above the gymnasium.

In fact, it's quite possible the Chippewas will open the regular season with only eight wrestlers available for competition, leaving themselves extremely shorthanded.

The Chippewas have four seniors on the roster: Keaton Ensley, Ryan Rochman, Torin Sheptock and Keith Barke. Ensley and Barke both had successful seasons last year before the pandemic shut everything down.

Ayden Bladzick-Garber is the only junior, and Brian Spruce the only sophomore. Two freshmen are included this season in the persons of Ava Maietta, Max Miles and Trevor Spencer.

Ensley and Barke both advanced to the regional tournament last year. Ensley qualified for state, marking the second time he's done so. He qualified as a sophomore. He'll be wrestling at 152 pounds this year.

Barke will probably be at 215 pounds, while Sheptock should be positioned at 189 and Rochman at 160.

"This is the hardest I've ever seen Ryan work," Bond said. "I took over the program halfway through last year, and I'm really excited to see what kind of intensity he brings to the table.

"It's all good signs right now. The kids have been really resilient. I know it's been disheartening with everything getting extended over and over. But, there's a light at the end of the tunnel.

"At least with swimming they could get in the pool, and basketball they could work on their shot. But, as far as no contact goes it's kind of hard to do that for wrestling."

Bond says the team has been conditioning hard, and hit the weight room

hard since November as much as they've been allowed. But it isn't the same as getting hands on wrestling.

One wrestler Bond feels is ready to take the next step is Bladzick-Garber, who was a .500 wrestler a year ago but showed much promise.

Maietta has impressed Bond with her work ethic. Bond says Miles has been very coachable, and is impressed with his attention to detail.

Spruce wrestled at 103 pounds last year, but is expected to move up a weight or two this season.

"I've just tried to be positive, and just trying show the kids things aren't always going to work out the way you want it to," Bond said. "They've responded to in a positive way.

"With the rapid testing, the kids won't have to wear a mask, and I'm hoping to get a couple more kids out. The big thing is to keep everyone safe. It's more about who the kids come in contact with. We just want to do this the right way."

GIRLS: Kott coaching Manistee girls team

FROM PAGE 6

Kott returns to the helm after spending last year in a supportive role following a stroke, and while he's not quite back to where he'd like to be, he's well enough to re-

sume coaching.

"I'm definitely glad to be back," Kott said. "It's been a long haul, and I've come a long ways. I'm really happy with where I'm at. I'm not totally satisfied with where I'm at.

"These girls are the best girls in the world, and they're helping me along, and I have some great assistant coaches helping me out this year. It's a wonderful situation all around."

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